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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Fifteenth session
15 January-2 February 1996

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Hanna Beate SCHÖPP-SCHILLING (Germany)

Addendum

IV. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

A. Introduction

1. As its fifteenth session, the Committee considered the reports submitted by eight States parties under Article 18 of the Convention: three combined initial and second reports, one combined initial, second and third report, one second report, one combined second and third report, and two third reports. The Committee also considered one report submitted on an exceptional basis.

2. As decided at its thirteenth session, the Committee prepared concluding comments on each report considered. For the status of the submission of reports by States parties, see annex ___ to the present report.

3. The Committee's concluding comments on the reports of States parties, as prepared respectively by the members of the Committee, and a summary of the introductory presentations by the representatives of the States parties are provided below. The summary records provide more detailed information on the Committee's consideration of reports of the States parties.

B. Consideration of reports

1. Initial reports

Cyprus

4. The Committee considered the initial and second periodic reports of Cyprus (CEDAW/C/CYP/1-2) at its 287th meeting, on 15 January, and at its ___ meeting, on 23 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.287).

5. In his introductory statement the representative of Cyprus reviewed progress achieved in promoting the status of women since the ratification of the Convention in 1985, taking into consideration economic, political and social changes resulting from the occupation of parts of the territory since 1974. Legal and other measures had been adopted and obstacles to implementation of the Convention have been addressed. Since the submission of the report, a new national machinery for women's rights had been set up and legislative changes in a number of areas have occurred, in particular in the areas of family law and labour legislation. Traditional and stereotyped gender ideas constituted an impediment to the full and equal participation of women in decision-making and employment, and influenced educational choices.

6. Programmes and measures had been adopted to assist women to combine family and employment. Emphasis had been given to the expansion and improvement of child-care facilities. Vocational education designed for women had been introduced.

7. Educational programmes had been revised to promote equality between men and women. Programmes for rural women had been introduced to promote their role in agriculture and encourage their participation in decision-making. Women had access to health care and infant mortality had been reduced to low levels. Maternal health care was a priority and information was available on diseases and health hazards for women.

8. The representative reported on the Government's priorities and future plans in implementing the Convention, including strengthening the national machinery for women; vocational training for women and educational and awareness-raising efforts among teachers; expansion of child care; supplementing the recently reformed family law and the remaining legal instruments that involved unequal treatment of women; improvements for rural women; prevention of violence against women; women's participation in decision-making; and possible creation of an equal opportunities commission. He stated, however, that owing to the continuing Turkish occupation of part of the territory, the Government of Cyprus was unable to ensure the enjoyment by women of their rights in the occupied part of the island.

Introduction

9. The Committee welcomed the high-level representation of the Cyprus Government and the well-drafted reports presented by it, which contained detailed information on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in accordance with the Committee's

reporting guidelines. It expressed its appreciation, in particular, for the frank identification of obstacles and problems and of the major policy issues of concern to women in Cyprus. The Committee also welcomed the ongoing efforts, policies and plans to eliminate discrimination against women in Cyprus and the sincere and detailed responses of the representative of the Government of Cyprus to the Committee's questions.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

10. The Committee noted with concern the reservation of the Government as to the exclusion of women from the military.

11. The Committee acknowledged the State party's statement that owing to the occupation of a part of the territory of Cyprus, it could not give any information as to the implementation of the Convention in areas not under its jurisdiction.

12. The Committee noted the observation in the report that the most serious obstacles to implementation of the Convention were social attitudes and practices based on traditional and stereotyped ideas regarding the roles of men and women.

Positive aspects

13. The Committee welcomed the report's assertion that the impact of the ratification of the Convention had been significant: in particular, that the Convention had served as a framework for government policy to reduce inequality, had helped to stimulate major changes in policy and had been a useful tool for women's organizations pressing for change.

14. The Committee commended the efforts of the Government to implement the Convention in relation to equal pay for work of equal value and to expand child day-care facilities and consider social security for homemakers.

15. The Committee welcomed the amendment made by the Government to the Constitution establishing special civil courts as the only courts for family matters.

16. It commended the steps taken by the Government to subsidize measures undertaken by enterprises to provide child care. The Committee noted with satisfaction the high level of education attained by women and girls in Cyprus and appreciated the educational programmes to raise awareness of equality and the elimination of traditional gender stereotypes, especially among rural women, and to address health and sexual health.

17. The Committee welcomed the introduction of legislation on violence against women within the family, in particular clarifying that marital rape is a criminal offense. In addition, the law gives full protection to victims while imposing severe penalties upon the perpetrators, and facilitate the reporting of violence through primary health care providers. The Committee also welcomed the establishment of counselling services and the Government's contribution to support a crisis centre for victims of violence run by a voluntary association.

18. The Committee noted with appreciation the efforts of the Government to address issues of women's discrimination in TV, radio and advertising, including programmes dealing with women's issues, women's participation in broadcasting and the portrayal of women's image.

19. The Committee welcomed the initiative to support and provide incentives to the establishment of women's agricultural cooperatives.

Principal areas of concern

20. The Committee noted with great concern the information on international trafficking of women and of their sexual exploitation, including women from other countries, in violation of article 6 of the Convention.

21. The Committee also noted the low representation of women in the legislature and in political life, and their absence from higher levels of government.

22. The Committee expressed its concern that the Government treats the low fertility rate in Cyprus as a reason for retaining the existing criminal law restrictions on abortion.

Suggestions and recommendations

23. The Committee recommends that the Government take immediate action on its commitment made at the Fourth World Conference on Women to strengthen the national machinery for women, including its administrative structure, budget, human resources and its executive powers. The Committee further recommended that the national machinery be empowered to formulate policy, and to initiate and review legislative proposals pertaining to the status of women.

24. The Committee urges the Government to take into consideration all general recommendations of the Committee in future reports under the Convention.

25. The Committee recommends that the Government continue its efforts to review and rectify legislation that discriminates against women in light of the Convention. It draws the Government's attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 19 for amending its penal code regarding violence against women.

26. The Committee urges the Government to explore the proposal of non-governmental organizations to establish an equal opportunities commission to deal with complaints by women and to serve in a mediatory capacity.

27. The Committee strongly recommends that urgent special temporary measures be adopted, under article 4 of the Convention, with the aim of substantially increasing the presence of women in all areas of public and political life, as well as actively promoting their position in the senior management of the civil service and in the diplomatic service.

28. The Committee recommends that the Government take additional measures through local and international law-enforcement authorities to combat the international trafficking and sexual exploitation of women. It encourages the

Government to persist in its efforts to regulate the employment of foreign artists and entertainers, and to prosecute in cases of criminal offenses. The Committee further urges the Government to provide education, training and support to facilitate the entry of migrant women into other occupations in the formal labour market.

29. The Committee urges the Government to explore the issue of equal pay for work of equal value, to avail itself of existing experience in other countries and to begin campaigns to raise awareness of this issue among trade unions, employers' associations and women's organizations.

30. The Committee encourages the Government of Cyprus to pursue the initiative to enact special legislation addressing the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace as quickly as possible.

31. The Committee encourages the Government to generate systematic data disaggregated by sex in all areas, and in particular in health needs and services to assist in policy planning.

32. The Committee exhorts the Government to extend full social security coverage to self-employed rural women and to abolish existing discrimination in this respect between married and unmarried women.

33. The Committee urges the Government to implement special sensitization and training programmes in gender issues for all law enforcement officials and judges, particularly judges in family courts.